

Testimony Opposing House Bills No. 5554 and No. 6056 and Senate Bill No. 634

Distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to you today. My name is Stephen Heller. I live in Woodbridge Connecticut, which borders on the city of New Haven.

Since the cameras have been installed at New Haven intersections, I have certainly noticed them and I was initially under the impression that they were active for ticketing use. Subsequently I have learned that although they were in place, they were not being used to ticket drivers. I am here today to speak against activating these cameras or using any others to fine drivers.

I have a number of concerns related to this proposed legislation. First, I am not aware of any assurances as to how these cameras will be used. For example, will a motorist turning right on a red light be ticketed if he or she does not come to a complete stop? Will a motorist be ticketed if he or she stops at a red light with the front wheels of the car a few inches over the white stop line? Once the cameras are active, will they be used to monitor other behaviors such as cell phone use, texting, or maybe glancing at a newspaper on the passenger seat? The point is that there is potential for seeking out harmless technical infractions because of an inherent conflict of interest, i.e. more tickets means more revenue.

Secondly, I am concerned about the implications for the right to privacy. Although the stated purpose of active cameras is to promote safe driving behavior, these cameras provide a record of where the motorist was, where he or she was going, when he or she was there, and who else was in the vehicle. What assurances are there that this information will not be misused?

Finally, I am concerned about the lack of consistent, convincing evidence that the proposed automated cameras prevent accidents and/or save lives. Studies in some municipalities have reported favorable results; however, these studies have not been adequately controlled and it is not clear that the reported safety improvements, were in fact, attributable to installation of the cameras rather than other variables, e.g. an overall reduction in traffic accidents, such as has been observed in many municipalities without cameras. Other studies have reported no change, or an increased number of traffic accidents associated with installation of automated cameras.

Overall, we are dealing with the potential risks of conflict of interest and violation of privacy on the one hand, with no convincing or consistent evidence of any benefit. I therefore oppose this legislation and urge you to vote against it.

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